

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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JOINT STATE, AID, ICA MESSAGE

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: ASIG, BB

SUBJ: INSPECTION RECOMMENDATION: REST AND RECUPERATION

REF, STATE 078018

1. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THEIR INSPECTION OF THIS POST, THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSPECTORS NOTED IN THEIR EXIT MEMORANDUM: QUOTE THE INSPECTORS BELIEVE THAT THE ISOLATION OF THE STAFF MEMBERS AT EMBASSY BRIDGETOWN SUPPORTS A RECOMMENDATION THAT THE POST BE AUTHORIZED R & R TRAVEL. THE CONDITIONS AT THE POST ARE OF SUCH SEVERITY THAT A CHANGE IN ENVIRONMENT DURING A TWO-YEAR ASSIGNMENT WOULD HELP RESTORE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE STAFF MEMBERS AND HELP MAINTAIN MORALE AT A HIGH LEVEL. THE AMBASSADOR, IN CONSULTATION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF AID AND USIS, SHOULD RECOMMEND IN A JOINT AIRGRAM TO THE DEPARTMENT (ARA/MOT), THAT THE POST BE AUTHORIZED TO GRANT R & R TRAVEL. UNQUOTE. THIS TELEGRAM COMPLIES WITH THE INSPECTORS' RECOMMENDATION NOW ALSO CONTAINED IN THEIR FORMAL INSPECTION REPORT.

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2. DESPITE ITS SITUATION IN A TOURIST MECCA, SERIOUS MORALE PROBLEMS EXISTED AT THIS POST UNTIL RECENTLY. THERE WERE MORE GRIEVANCES FILED, DISSENT MESSAGES TRANSMITTED, AND REQUESTS FOR EARLY TRANSFER MADE THAN WOULD BE NORMAL FOR A POST THIS SIZE. AT ONE STAGE THE SITUATION REQUIRED THE SENDING OF A SPECIAL INSPECTOR TO DETERMINE THE ORIGIN OF THE PROBLEMS PLAGUING THE POST.

THE PREVIOUS SITUATION IS WELL KNOWN TO THE DEPARTMENT. THE FILES IN THE INSPECTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE AND IN PERSONNEL ARE CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT ALTHOUGH BARBADOS IS A TROPICAL PARADISE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO WORK AND LIVE HERE FOR SUSTAINED PERIODS OF TIME.

3. IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS THERE HAS BEEN AN ALMOST TOTAL TURNOVER IN THE AMERICAN STAFF AT THIS MISSION. THE NEW STAFF IS HIGHLY MOTIVATED, WELL ADAPTED AND HARD WORKING. MORALE GENERALLY IS PRETTY GOOD. THUS FAR THE PROBLEMS OF THE PAST HAVE NOT RECURRED BUT THERE ARE EARLY SIGNS OF WHAT IS LOCALLY KNOWN AS "ISLAND FEVER", A DISTURBING SENSE OF BEING CIRCUMSCRIBED AND ISOLATED. FOR THESE REASONS THE POST STRONGLY CONCURS WITH THE INSPECTOR'S RECOMMENDATION THAT REST AND RECUPERATION TRAVEL BE INSTITUTED FOR THIS MISSION. WE ARE SURE THE CONDITIONS HERE ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE WHICH RESULTED IN INSTITUTING R & R TRAVEL FOR ALL OUR NEIGHBORING CARIBBEAN POSTS. FURTHER JUSTIFICATION FOLLOWS:

4. THE CENTRAL AND UNESCAPABLE FACT IN STAFF MORALE IS THAT BARBADOS IS AN ISOLATED AND VERY SMALL ISLAND. BARBADOS MEASURES ONLY 14 BY 21 MILES. THE ISLAND IS GENERALLY FLAT AND DEVOID OF EITHER TOPOGRAPHICAL OR CLIMATIC CONTRASTS. RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSIONS ARE EXTREMELY LIMITED AND THERE IS NO NEARBY RELIEF. IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BARBADOS THERE ARE NO GOOD CINEMAS, RESTAURANTS AND NIGHT CLUBS ARE EITHER NOT VERY GOOD OR VERY EXPENSIVE WHEN THEY ARE GOOD. CULTURAL STIMULATION IS MINIMAL--THERE IS LITTLE CLASSICAL MUSIC, NO REAL ART GALLERIES, NO BALLET, FEW MUSEUMS, AND ONLY AMATEUR THEATRE. THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY IS FILLED WITH TRANSIENT VISITORS WITH WHOM THERE IS LITTLE IF ANY MEANINGFUL CONTACT; WHILE HOUSING GENERALLY IS ADEQUATE, RUNNING A HOUSEHOLD HERE IS A SERIES OF DAILY EXASPERATIONS AND HIGH EXPENSE. ROADS ON THE ISLAND ARE VERY NARROW, ILL-PAVED, DARK AND DANGEROUS. GOING FOR A DRIVE, ASSUMING THERE WERE SOME PLACE TO GO, IS NOT A PLEASURE. THERE ARE ALMOST NO SIDEWALKS, SO WALKS IN THE HEAVY TRAFFIC ARE RISKY. ALTHOUGH THE CLIMATE IS GOOD, IT IS MONOTONOUSLY HOT. THE MOST ATTRACTIVE FEATURES OF BARBADOS ARE THE FRIENDLY PEOPLE AND THE SUPERB BEACHES, BUT EVEN THESE ATTRIBUTES ARE NOT ENOUGH TO WARD OFF TROPICAL ENNUI.

5. AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS, PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO THIS MISSION TEND TO FEEL ISOLATED, HEMMED IN, BORED, FATIGUED BY THE CLIMATE, AND SUBJECT TO DEPRESSION OR IRRITABILITY. THESE COMPLAINTS ARE COMMON TO ALL EXPATRIATES HERE.

THOSE WHO CAN, MAKE FREQUENT TRIPS TO ESCAPE THE ADVERSE
PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF LIVING ON A SMALL ISLAND.

6. THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT HAS RECENTLY GRANTED ITS
MISSION HERE A GRADUATED HARDSHIP DIFFERENTIAL AND INSTI-
TUTED R AND R TRAVEL ON THE GROUNDS THAT SUCH STEPS WERE
NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY AND MORALE. R
CANADIAN OFFICIAL PERSONNEL MAY FLY TO ANY POINT IN
CANADA FOR A MINIMUM OF TEN DAYS.

7. WE BELIEVE A SIMILAR PROGRAM OF R AND R TRAVEL IS
TIMELY FOR THIS POST. WE URGE SPEEDY ACTION BY THE
DEPARTMENT TO INSTITUTE SUCH A PROGRAM.

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